

TUNE HISTORY – The Bloody Fields of Flanders

The Flanders region is located in Northern France and Southern Belgium and was the site of much fierce fighting during the Great War of 1914 - 1918. Fighting took place in this region for four years at places of significance like Ypres, Passchendaele and Lys. Because this is a region and not the site of one particular battle casualty estimates are vague, but at Ypres alone casualties during the conflict are estimated at almost 1,000,000 on both sides. Losses at Passchendaele are estimated at around 700,000. The Lys offensive saw some 120,000 casualties. Bloody fields indeed!

John MacLellan was the Pipe Major of the 8th Argylls at the time and composed the 3/4 retreat March which he named, The Bloody Fields of Flanders. It is a fine tune indeed and one worthy of learning.



John MacLellan DCM, (Dunoon)

Pipe Major John MacLellan DCM

John MacLellan was born in Dunoon in 1875. He served with the Highland Light Infantry in the Boer War where he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

Upon his return he joined the Govan Police Pipe Band.

He re-enlisted in 1919 and became Pipe Major of the 8th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. He was wounded during the Great War in France.

He is known as one of the greatest composers of modern bagpipe music, and particularly of marches. Tunes including, *Bens of Jura (Road to the Isles)*, *The Highland Brigade at Magersfontein*, *The Taking of Beaumont Hamel*, *Men of Argyll*, *Southall*, *Glen Caladh Castle*, *The Dream Valley of Glendaruel* and many more notable tunes.

Hamish Henderson a Scottish Poet and Songwriter heard the tune at the Anzio beach head and added words to it in 1960. The song known as "Freedom come all ye" has become a favourite and was a contender for the Scottish National Anthem.

The contribution to our musical repertoire by John MacLellan is considerable and he is regarded as one who brought pipe music to the masses. This tune is indeed an example of the quality of his compositions.

The Bloody Fields Of Flanders

RETREAT

J. MacLellan



A sound file of this tune can be found on the Green Hills set on track 11 here:
http://www.reverbNation.com/store/store/artist_1015869?item_type=music

Lesson and tune downloads can be found at the School of Piping site on the Audio Lessons page. This includes everything from basic/Intermediate level tunes to Piobaireachd.

<http://www.schoolofpiping.com/lessons.html>

An advertisement for 'Piping Lesson Downloads and CDs' by Pipe Major Brett Tidswell. The background is a dark green, textured surface. The text is written in a yellow, cursive font. A photograph of a piper in a black uniform playing bagpipes is shown in a red-bordered frame on the right side. The URL <http://www.schoolofpiping.com/lessons.html> is written in red at the bottom.